

American military presence declines in Somalia

MOGADISHU (AP) — U.S. troop presence in Somalia continues to decline, dipping to less than half of Operation Restore Hope's international troops for the first time since the operation began three months ago.

The United States is moving gradually towards handing over its leadership of the mission to the United Nations. U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali has proposed May 1 for the hand-over.

The U.S. contingent in Somalia is now 13,905 soldiers, compared to a total of 14,017 troops from 22 other countries.

American troop strength reached a peak of 24,003 on Jan. 26.

Marine Colonel Fred Peck, the U.S. military spokesman, said about 500 more Americans are expected to leave the next two days.

The United States turned over operational control of the Baidoa district to forces from Morocco Sunday. Only three of Somalia's nine districts — Mogadishu, Bardere and Merca — remain under U.S. control.

In Washington, Deputy National Security Adviser Sandy Berger said the United States hopes to put a resolution before the U.N. Security Council soon to transfer the operation to U.N. peacekeepers.

"It will enable us to continue to withdraw American soldiers and eventually turn this over to basically a U.N. operation," Ms. Berger said in an interview on CNN's "Newsweek Sunday."

When former President George Bush sent American soldiers to Somalia in December to guard relief shipments to starving Somalis, he said he hoped most would be out by President Bill Clinton's inauguration, on Jan. 20. But continued lawlessness in Somalia forced officials to push back the departure date.

Dr. Ghali told ABC's "This Week with David Brinkley" he hoped the removal of the U.S.-led coalition troops will be done gradually and that some American soldiers would remain as part of the U.N. peacekeeping operation.

Defence Secretary Les Aspin, interviewed separately on the programme, said the United States would keep from 3,000 to 5,000 troops in Somalia to provide logistical support for the U.N. force.

Meanwhile, U.S. marines Sunday mourned the death of one of their comrades, an apparent suicide.

Officials said they would not release the Marine's name until his relatives were notified. He apparently shot himself to death Saturday night.

"It makes the loss, for some people, a little harder to accept," said Steven Kaegedine, who had commanded the soldier.

Six other Americans have been killed in the Somalia aid operation.

In the southern port city of Kismayu, where Belgian forces assumed control Friday, clashes continued Sunday between supporters of two rival warlords, Col. Omar Jess and Mohammad Said Hersi, also known as General Hiran.

Col. Peck said sporadic gunfire and possible grenade blasts were heard at a demonstration in Kismayu involving 100 to 300 people who had assembled barricades of burning tires. It was not known if there were casualties.



A young Somali bodyguard carries a gun near Mogadishu escorting a truck carrying relief supplies (AFP photo).

American Muslims expect backlash in wake of blast

NEW YORK (AP) — The arrest of a Muslim Arab in the World Trade Centre bombing has prompted threatening phone calls and at least one act of vandalism against Muslims — and some say they fear more attacks on their community.

Threatening and obscene phone calls have been made to numerous Muslim centres around the country since Thursday's arrest of Mohammad Salameh, said M.T. Mehdi, president of the American Arab Relations Committee.

A mosque in Jersey City, where Mr. Salameh reportedly worshipped, was vandalised over the weekend. About a dozen people took part in a peaceful demonstration in front of it Sunday that was organised by the New York-based Coalition for Jewish Concerns.

Mr. Salameh, 25, is being held without bail in connection with the Feb. 26 bombing that killed five people and closed the trade centre's twin 110-storey towers for at least a month.

"It's very unfortunate and disappointing that this open society is not quite as open and protective," said Mr. Mehdi. "There is a chill thrown upon our freedom of expression because we are Muslims."

Dr. Mehdi, who is also secretary general of the National Council on Islamic Affairs, said many of his colleagues in this country have reported a surge in hostility against Muslims.

Dr. Shaheer Yousef, who is active in local and national Islamic affairs, said people have been asking him a lot of suspicious questions about Islam.

"They think Islam and extremism are one and the same thing," said Dr. Yousef. "They think Muslims in this country are a potential threat to this country. This is the perception. I believe people are grossly misinformed."

Dr. Yousef said he feels "threatened by the tone of their questions. I know what they're thinking."

Islam is America's fastest growing religion with more than 10 million adherents, about 800,000 of them in the New York area, Dr. Mehdi said. Most are immigrants from the Middle East, Asia and Africa. There are 1.2 billion followers of Islam worldwide, he said.

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Dr. Mohammad Said, who is active in several national Arab groups, said his chil-

children are afraid their classmates will taunt them.

"My children are concerned about when they go back to school," Dr. Said said. "This hostility is because people are really confused about Muslims. Some people who have underlying prejudices take this opportunity and label all Muslims the same."

Muslims in a heavily Arab neighbourhood of Brooklyn, New York voiced similar fears Sunday.

"They all think Muslims want to go kill people," said Sudanese-born Sidahmed Mahjoub, 34, leading through Arab newspapers at the Fertile Crescent deli before he went to a nearby mosque.

"They think all Muslims do that. It's wrong thinking. We are good people. We don't approve of the bombing."

Taher Mughrabi, 50, said attention focused on Mr. Salameh has tainted his religion.

"When I talk to people about Muslims, they think we are all hard and bad," Mr. Mughrabi said. "That's not true. It's a hard religion but it's not bad (Salameh) was just one person. It doesn't have anything to do with the rest of us."

Despite the relief shipments spreading throughout the country for almost three months, tremendous need remains. Death rates remain high in some areas, mostly from disease ravaging the malnourished.

The major crop season begins soon and if successful, could help ease the food shortage, officials say.

In the meantime, reliance remains heavy on donated food that now reaches remote

areas in truck convoys with foreign troops riding shotgun.

But the risk also has increased. While the foreign troops have intimidated Somalia's warring factions into putting away their heavy weapons, former militia fighters have resorted to robbery and looting since they lost their jobs.

"It's going to be a long time before armed banditry is brought under control in Somalia," departing U.S. special envoy Robert Oakley said last week.

In a bid to crack down on violence, foreign troops have tried to seize any weapons they find in volatile areas such as Mogadishu and Kismayu. The crackdown resulted in Somalia drivers and guards for relief agencies losing their weapons.

Some now have permission for guards to carry automatic rifles, but robbers still perceive relief agencies and vehi-

cles as potential prey and possible sources of otherwise scarce cash, food and electronic equipment.

In February, two relief agencies had large amounts of money stolen the night before they were to pay their workers. In both cases, former local employees were suspected.

"I know that our people feel more insecure now than they did before," said Brenda Barton of the World Food Programme (WFP).

Just ask Johannes O'Sellasse, a WFP truck driver. He was robbed of his sleeping bag, clothes, money and food in a 30-second attack while he drove in a convoy guarded by Pakistani soldiers.

"They were fast, fast," Mr. O'Sellasse said of the two men who jumped onto his cab, forced open the passenger door and held a gun to his throat. "I tried to push them but when I see a pistol and the knife, what can I do?"

Lebanese army arrests 11 suspects in shootout

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanese soldiers have apprehended 11 rival Shiite Muslim militiamen wanted for a weekend shootout in south Beirut, the army command said Monday.

A communiqué said the pro-Iranian fundamentalist Hizbollah late Sunday handed over to the army command nine of 10 men involved in the firefight with the more secular pro-Syrian Amal movement.

The statement said two others, a Hizbollahi and an Amal, were arrested at a Lebanese army checkpoint in east Beirut's Jisr Al Basha neighbourhood.

An army official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the command was waiting for the leadership of Amal and Hizbollah to hand over seven others.

An earlier military communiqué stressed the newly restructured, 42,000-strong army will not "hesitate to quell harshly any disorders."

The army established a permanent presence in the lawless slums of south Beirut in December. The suburbs that abut the city's airport witnessed the birth of Shiite violence during the height of Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, when the army disintegrated along sectarian lines.

On Monday, troops were raiding houses in the south Beirut district of Ghobeiri, a Hizbollah stronghold, and the nearby Amal-controlled Shiyah area in search for the wanted men and illegal weapons.

Saturday's clash was triggered by an exchange of insults between members of Amal and Hizbollah in the Tayyounah suburb.

One civilian was wounded when Hizbollah activists opened up with machine-gun fire at the offices of Amal in Shiyah.

The hostilities flared during a brief vacuum resulting from a rotation of troops, the army said.

House Speaker Nabih Berri, who heads Amal, declared support for the army's measures "to enforce law, hunt down irregulars and crush violations."

But Hizbollah's politburo chief, Hussein Khalil, said "the army should be kept out of the quagmire of Lebanese politics and domestic disputes."

It was the first shootout since the army took over security duties in south Beirut in December.

During the civil war, pro-Iranian groups turned the slums into a haven for suicide bombers and hostage-takers.

Most of the American, British and French hostages grabbed since 1984 were held for years in the slums.

Amal and Hizbollah were locked in a 1987-1990 intermittent struggle for control of Lebanon's 1.2 million Shiites, who make up the country's largest single sect.

Hizbollah is the standard bearer of Iran's brand of Shiite fundamentalism while Amal is more secular.

Although the government has disarmed most militias that fought in Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war, various militias still retain some of their light arms.

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"Most of the governments in that area are deeply concerned about Iran's role in promoting this," said Mr. Gates, who retired as CIA director in January at the end of the George Bush administration.

Egypt's current problems are "basically indigenous, but to a considerable degree they are aggravated by the Iranians and perhaps others," he added.

Mr. Gates made his comments on ABC Television. He said it was too early to say whether any state was behind the Feb. 26 bombing of New York's World Trade Centre, which killed five

people and injured 1,000. Iran accused Israel Sunday of involvement in the bombing and said the Jewish state and the United States were using the blast to stir a frenzy against Islamic fundamentalism.

"The fingerprints of (Israeli intelligence service) Mossad and Israel are quite visible in the New York bombing," a Tehran Radio commentary said.

The radio said the blast "bore unmistakable resemblance to other Mossad operations in Italy, Tunisia, Beirut and France" without elaborating.

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Islamic Group denies link to New York blast

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's most active Muslim militant group denied Monday any link to the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York and warned that accusations defaming its spiritual mentor would not pass unpunished.

The fundamentalist Al Gama'a Al Islamiya (Islamic Group) said in a statement it did not attack innocent people of any religion.

It said Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, a blind preacher who lives in New Jersey, had no connection to the bombing that killed five people and wounded more than 1,000.

"Unjustly defaming Imam Omar Abdul Rahman will under no conditions pass without action whether on the level of Al Gama'a Al Islamiya or his followers and supporters in the world. Doctor Omar has not been, is not and will never be a scapegoat," the group said in a fax to an international news agency.

Two suspects arrested in connection with the World Trade Centre bombings are reported to be followers of Sheikh Abdul Rahman.

"Al Gama'a Al Islamiya, while stressing that Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, may God preserve him, has no link whatsoever to the explosion at the World Trade Centre, would like to clarify important matters."

"The policy of Al Gama'a Al Islamiya does not target innocents regardless of their religious," the group said.

"Targeting Doctor Omar aims at disfiguring the image of faithful Muslim scholars in the world which could have had repercussions on relations between Muslims and the West in the future," it added.

One of the suspects is Mohammad Salameh, who was arrested Thursday and charged by U.S. prosecutors on suspicion of renting a van which was used in the bombing.

The other is a 42-year-old Egyptian, Ibrahim Al Gabrowny, arrested on charges that he hit two federal agents who were trying to search him at his apartment.

Sheikh Abdul Rahman, who was tried but acquitted on charges of sanctifying the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, has been living in the United States since 1990.

The Egyptian government has accused him of sending militants in Egypt tape-recorded sermons, money and publications inciting them to attack security forces and tourists.

The group said the coincidence of the New York blast and an explosion in a cafe in Cairo last Friday had been "arranged by hands which undoubtedly planned to harm Al Gama'a Al Islamiya and its symbols in Cairo and abroad."

The government accused Muslim militants of planting the cafe bomb, which killed three people and injured 16. But the Gama'a denied it had anything to do with it.

"Directing random accusations against Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman while (Egyptian President Hosni) Mubarak is preparing for new military trials against militant suspects is 'extremely suspicious,'" the Gama'a statement said.

The trial of 49 alleged militants charged with attacks on foreigners that have devastated Egypt's tourist industry is due to begin in a military court just outside Cairo Tuesday.

Military Prosecutor-General Major-General Mohammed Abdullah said some could be sentenced to death if convicted. Six would be tried in their absence because they were still on the run.

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Protecting relief workers crucial in Somalia

By Tom Cohen
The Associated Press

MOGADISHU — Bandits kill a relief worker in a roadside ambush. Two men hop a moving truck and rob the driver before soldiers guarding the food convoy know what happened. Relief agencies are pilled as payday approaches.

Routine violence continues for relief workers in Somalia, despite the thousands of foreign troops sent to restore order. The U.S.-led military coalition has ended outright clan warfare, but seems unable to stop widespread banditry in a country with no government and plenty of guns.

U.S. officials say the coalition forces never intended to serve as a police force, only to ensure that food and other emergency aid reach the needy. The United Nations wants to start a national police force, but that is

months away, after it takes over the security mission from the United States.

Foreign relief officials say they will leave if aid workers continue to get killed. Such an exodus would cripple and perhaps terminate the relief effort credited with saving millions of lives since last year.

"The whole future of the country in the next months is based on whether the expatriates stay," said Mike McDonagh, field director for the Irish relief agency Concern.

Just two weeks ago, nurse Valerie Place of Concern died when her vehicle was ambushed while travelling north of Mogadishu. At least two other foreign relief workers have been killed since the troops arrived Dec. 9, and three Somalis working for the International Committee of the Red Cross died in a landmine blast.

"If another one or two are killed, these agencies are going to get a lot of pressure

from their governments and their people back home to not be here," said Ian MacLeod, spokesman for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

United Nations agencies supplying food to Somalia work only with the foreign relief groups instead of local Somalis, a legacy of the vast looting and corruption of the past. The departure of foreign organisations would leave a void unlikely to be filled, Mr. McDonagh said.

Despite the relief shipments spreading throughout the country for almost three months, tremendous need remains. Death rates remain high in some areas, mostly from disease ravaging the malnourished.

The major crop season begins soon and if successful, could help ease the food shortage, officials say.

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areas in truck convoys with foreign troops riding shotgun.

But the risk also has increased. While the foreign troops have intimidated Somalia's warring factions into putting away their heavy weapons, former militia fighters have resorted to robbery and looting since they lost their jobs.

"It's going to be a long time before armed banditry is brought under control in Somalia," departing U.S. special envoy Robert Oakley said last week.

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JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Michael Vaillant
18:30 Testimonies
19:00 News in French
19:15 Kargo
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Perfect Strangers
21:10 The Drumwater Dynasty
22:00 News in English
22:30 Big Man

PRAYER TIMES

04:34 Fajr
05:51 Sunrise
11:46 Dhuhr
15:47 Asr
17:42 Maghreb
18:59 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetith, Tel. 810748
Assumption of God Church, Tel. 61375
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624900
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 627448
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terminus Church Tel. 622360

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 63851, Tel. 62543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261
St. Raphael Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 623238
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 623238
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 623424, 654932
Church of the Nazareth Tel. 675691
Church of the Redeemer ... Tel. 635252

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be partly cloudy and winds will be westerly fresh. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy and dusty, with winds will be southerly fresh and seas rough.

Min./Max. temp.
Aqaba 14/24
Deserts 3/14
Jordan Valley 9/20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 12, Aqaba 24. Humidity readings:

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mohammad Labadeh 663585
Dr. Zain Zaghoul 638591
Dr. Fayez Al Dabbas 759155

Crown Prince urges quality advances in educational system

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Monday chaired a meeting of the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research to discuss the implementation of resolutions and recommendations of the 1987 National Educational Conference.

Stressing the need for the council to arrange for good quality textbooks for the primary stage, the Crown Prince said there was an urgency for preparing such books according to plan.

He underlined the responsibility of parents as well as teachers in evaluating the children's books, adding that every effort should be made to benefit from the experiences of other Arab and foreign countries.

Particular attention in this regard, the Prince said, should be given to books on science, mathematics, vocational training and English language.

Referring to school buildings, Prince Hassan said care should be taken to have schools built in convenient areas, and teachers in remote regions should be provided with housing.

He said that the Ministry of Education can undertake such endeavours in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

The Crown Prince said universities should be urged to finalise advanced teacher training programmes as agreed to with the ministry.

In this regard, Prince Hassan stressed the need for the ministry to closely coordinate its efforts with those of the National Centre for Educational Development and Research (NCEDR).

He expressed his interest in seeing vocational training programmes at Jordanian schools promoted and stressed the need for linking vocational training to the requirements of the local labour market and Jordanian development schemes.

As the new educational courses in schools aim at graduating Tawjihi students with advanced training, said Prince Hassan, there is a need for the development of programmes and plans at universities to adapt to the new situation.

He expressed hope that the universities will establish principles to allow for school graduates to enroll in Jordan's institutes of higher education in accordance with the new principles.

At the outset of the meeting, Deputy Premier and Minister of Education Thouban Al Hindawi outlined plans for the implementation of the 1987 conference resolutions.



Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday greets Amman twins born in Amman, during her tour of the International Tourism Exchange in Berlin (AFP photo)

Labour conference could serve as forum to push Arab reconciliation

By P. V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A conference of Arab ministers of labour in Amman next month could serve as a fresh forum to advance efforts to mend Arab fences and bring about reconciliation among the Arab states, officials said Monday.

Most Arab countries have accepted ministerial-level invitations to the conference issued by the Ministry of Labour through their respective diplomatic missions here, Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Kabarti said.

Other sources said Kuwait and some of the Arab Maghreb countries were among those yet to confirm their participation.

Mr. Kabarti said the Arab League secretary-general, Esmat Abdul Meguid, had confirmed that he would attend the April 5 Arab Labour Office (ALO) meeting, the first Arab League gathering in Jordan since the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The Gulf Arab states sent low-level delegations to a meeting of planning ministers of the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) member states held in Amman in September last year.

Dr. Abdul Meguid, who will address the ALO conference in Amman, will also hold talks with "senior Jordanian officials on current efforts to clear the Arab atmosphere as well as the latest developments in the region," Mr. Kabarti said.

But this does not necessarily mean that Dr. Abdul Meguid is planning a new phase in Arab League efforts to heal inter-Arab rifts.

At the same time, the meeting, which will be formally opened by His Majesty King Hussein, "will definitely afford us an opportunity to reaffirm our goodwill and our desire for better relations."



Abdul Karim Al Kabarti

Mr. Kabarti told the Jordan Times.

Jordan's appreciation of the assistance the Gulf states used to extend to the Kingdom prior to the Gulf crisis and the employment opportunities Jordanians still have in the Gulf states — except Kuwait — was a key theme in speeches made by Mr. Kabarti at Arab and international labour forums, including the 1992 ALO meeting held in Libya and an International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference held in Geneva.

Around 300,000 Jordanians continue to work in the Gulf states; almost an equal number were forced out of Kuwait in the wake of the Gulf crisis.

"We are very grateful for the employment opportunities for Jordanians in the Gulf states and the treatment they receive in their host countries," said Mr. Kabarti.

While no-one sees a "magic formula" to mend the strain in Jordan's political relations with Gulf states, Jordanian officials reaffirm that the Kingdom remains open for serious efforts for Arab reconciliation without preconditions.

"We hope that the Amman

meeting would contribute to improving the Arab atmosphere," said another senior official, noting that "efforts for Arab reconciliation are an ongoing process, started the dust settled in the Gulf crisis."

At the same time, Jordanian analysts are sceptical over the chances of success of any effort at this stage in sealing the Arab schism.

"Arab reconciliation in the true sense hinges greatly on two issues: Iraq's relations with other Arab countries and the Arab-Israeli peace process," said Radwan Abdullah, head of the Political Science Department at the University of Jordan.

Dr. Abdullah noted that despite a recent flurry of reports of mediation between Iraq and Egypt, which led the Arab front in the U.S.-headed military coalition which fought Iraq, "very little has changed on the ground."

Dr. Abdullah, who says the Arab side would remain at a disadvantage in the Middle East peace process in the absence of a strong united Arab stand, also pointed out that there was little indication from the Gulf states of any desire to coordinate positions and present one Arab voice in negotiations with Israel.

"At the moment, there is no compelling individual reason for any of the Arab countries to settle differences and restore normal relations," he said.

According to Dr. Abdullah, in view of the "polarisation in the Arab World caused by the Gulf crisis," Arab reconciliation would come "only within the context of a new American design linked to the peace process to bring about economic interaction between the Gulf states and Israel."

"The fertile crescent — which includes Jordan, Syria and Lebanon as well as Iraq — will be key to such interaction," he said. As such, he added, "Jordan will definitely have its place in the sun."

Jordanian women's status is studied at conference

By Lima Nabli

Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — A working paper submitted to a committee preparing for a seminar on Jordanian women revealed that women's participation in the local labour market was modest and does not exceed 11.5 per cent of the total Jordanian workforce.

The paper, submitted by Minister of Planning Ziad Fariz to a meeting, chaired by Her Royal Highness Princess Basma, said that the low number of women in the nation's labour force is primarily attributable to the lack of serious family support for female members working in the labour market and therefore outside the home.

It said unemployment among able-bodied and willing-to-work females was estimated at 24 per cent of the total unemployed workforce in Jordan. Ministry of Education Secretary General Munther Al Masri presented a working paper which revealed a proximity in figures between male and female school students in the Kingdom.

The paper noted that illiteracy among women stood at 25 per cent for those above 16 years of age and 12 per cent among males.

The total number of females in vocational training programmes was estimated at 86,000 compared to 164,000 males at the end of the last school year.

But it noted that more than 57 per cent of students at community colleges were women.

Despite the high rate of school and university students, numerous constraints continue to obstruct the path of women in assuming senior positions in Jordan's social and economic sectors, the paper added.

Attorney Taher Hikmat, who participated in the meeting, presented a working paper on what he termed the "Legislative



Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Monday addresses a seminar on the status of Jordanian women. Participants seen here in the foreground from right to left are Minister of Planning Ziad Fariz, Lower House Deputy and former Prime Minister Taher Al Masri, Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Kabarti, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Ibrahim Izzeddine Al Tamimi and Minister of Social Development Amin Awad Mashaqbeh (Petra photo)

Dimension of Women's Involvement in Jordanian Life."

The Jordanian Constitution is void of any conditions giving privileges to men over women, he noted. According to the Constitution and in compliance with Islamic laws and regulations, women are equal to men in political rights and all basic rights, Mr. Hikmat added.

The paper suggested that a comprehensive study of laws related to women be conducted with a view to introducing amendments that would end the privileges of men over women.

Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Kabarti presented a working paper in which he focused on proposals put forth at the Nairobi Women's Conference of 1985.

He said these proposals were considered by the conference to be of paramount importance in forming national strategies on women's activities.

Although women are granted their political rights in theory in

many countries, they are in practice deprived of them for social considerations and long-standing traditions, he noted.

Addressing the meeting, which plans to pave the ground for a seminar entitled "Towards a National Women's Strategy in Jordan," Princess Basma emphasised the need for activating the role of Jordanian women in comprehensive development.

The committee, said the Princess, ought to shed light on women's issues, help spread public awareness about the role of women in society and contribute to the amendment of legislation pertaining to women.

What is required from the committee, she added, is to find ways of putting the final strategy into practice so that the public can see and feel its effects.

Former Prime Minister Taher Al Masri, a number of cabinet members and individuals concerned with women's issues attended the committee meeting.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Sharif Zeid to inaugurate new charity

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker is scheduled to inaugurate the newly founded Ghibal Charitable Society in Jabal Hussein district on Wednesday. The society aims to provide assistance to the needy and also to contribute to Jordanian cultural development and national heritage.

House reviews temporary education law

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament Monday resumed discussion of the 1988 temporary education law and discussed several proposals presented by its committees on various issues, including demands to improve the conditions of employees at the Natural Resources Authority, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Ministry of Supply and Jordanian state universities.

Antiquities office forms panel to monitor renovation plan

AMMAN (Petra) — Director General of the Antiquities Department Safwan Al Tell Monday formed a committee which comprises department engineers and officials to inspect the Dar Al Saraya building (the old Irbid jail) and follow-up procedures to convert it into an archaeological museum. Dr. Tell said the committee held its first meeting Monday and discussed its plans pending the evacuation of the jail. The Cabinet recently approved converting the jail which was built by the Ottomans into a museum which will include exhibition halls, a library, a laboratory and several offices. The renovation works are expected to be completed within the coming two years.

Ajloun safety group shuts down 4 shops

AJLOUN (Petra) — The Ajloun Public Safety Committee decided Monday to close four shops in the district because of violations of health and safety regulations. The closure orders followed an intensive campaign launched by the department to make sure that all shops selling food stuffs are abiding by health regulations.

Football team leaves for Doha

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan's national football team left for Doha, Qatar, Monday to play two friendly matches with the Qatari national team in the qualifying matches for the World Cup. The national team last week drew at one goal each with the Syrian national team in a match that was held at Irbid's Al Hassan Stadium.

Passport, finance offices study applying facsimile system

AMMAN (Petra) — The Civil Registration and Passports Department and the Ministry of Finance are currently studying the prospect of establishing facsimile links between the department and Jordanian embassies abroad. If the service is approved, the department can serve Jordanian citizens abroad in the shortest time possible and at minimum costs.

Irbid pushes campaign to relocate street vendors

IRBID (Petra) — The Irbid municipality is continuing its campaign to prevent vendors from selling their merchandise in the downtown area after the municipality assigned certain areas to them. The sources at the municipality said the campaign aims to preserve the city's cleanliness and reduce traffic jams in the downtown area.

Anti-Zionist group cables the Pope

AMMAN (J.T.) — The newly formed Society Against Zionism and Racism sent a message to His Holiness Pope John Paul II requesting that joint Vatican Arab committees be set up along the line of the Vatican-Israeli committee to promote relations. The message said Arab-Vatican committees are bound to reduce Israel's pressure on the Vatican.

Ministry supplies food to needy

KARAK (Petra) — The Ministry of Social Development recently distributed food supplies to needy families in the towns of Karak, Deir Allah and Shuneh. A statement said that the ministry planned to distribute more supplies Tuesday to needy families in Bani Hamidah, Dhiban and Bani Kinaneh settlements as part of distribution programmes conducted during the month of Ramadan. So far, 26,000 families received food supplies, said the statement.

200 needy families receive cash aid in Zarqa

ZARQA (Petra) — A voluntary effort has provided cash assistance to some 200 poor families in Zarqa, according to chairman of the Zarqa chapter of the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS), Mohammad Daoud Salah. He said the families benefiting from this donation are registered with the National Aid Fund.

Jordan, EC enter new hi-tech cooperation stage

AMMAN (J.T.) — Science and technology cooperation between the European Community (EC) and Jordan has entered a new stage with the signing of the Cooperation Project in Science Technology, said a recent EC Newsletter.

The ECU (European currency unit) 4 million project will support a range of special research programmes to be carried out by the University of Jordan, Yarmouk University, the Jordan University of Science and Technology and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and coordinated by the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST) with Higher Education for Development Cooperation (HEDCO) of Ireland, the EC reported.

HCST Secretary General Hani Al Mulki sees the new project as the logical development of the first and second phases of science and technology cooperation between Jordan and the EC.

According to the newsletter, these first phases built up Jordan's basic scientific and technological capabilities, laying the foundations for the specialised projects that will be developed under the new programme.

The EC said this will now be focused on three main areas of research. The University of Jordan Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Chemistry Department will carry out chemical and biological investigation of natural products. The department has a research group which is already active in this field and their research capabilities will now be strengthened.

The Agricultural Department at the Jordan University of Science and Technology will study aspects of the genetic improvement of sheep production in Jordan. The programme will build on existing contacts with University College of North Wales in Bangor and with the Jordan Cooperative Organisation's EC-supported Awassi Sheep Project this ensuring that research results can be used for immediate application by sheep farmers in Jordan.

Yarmouk University's Physics Department will concentrate on strengthening its capacity in the science and development of industrial materials. The common

objective of all its projects is to improve laboratory facilities so that the graduate programme can be enriched towards the implementation of a masters programme.

The project will also enable Yarmouk to fill the existing gap in its laser spectroscopy facilities. Dr. Mulki believes it is particularly important that the work carried out under the project should be tailored to Jordan's particular needs. "Scientific knowledge," he said, "is available knowledge. What developing countries need to do is to utilise it for the development of their own agriculture and industry."

Professor Minardo, experienced in literature and linguistics, said he was involved in the presentation of the Italian film week at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman last month.

The film week, another function that aims at bolstering Italian-Jordanian cultural relations, has become an annual event of the Italian embassy in Amman, which has recently established a cultural department, now run by Professor Minardo.

ANNOUNCEMENT

A Jordanian industrial and trading company is in need of an efficient and experienced Executive Secretary with the following qualifications:

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- Minimum experience of five years in secretarial practice.
- Excellent fluency in writing, reading and speaking Arabic and English.
- Excellent typing in Arabic and English.
- Excellent knowledge in fundamental computer and telex applications.
- Good and impressive personality.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITION

- ★ Exhibition of handicrafts by Jordanian artist Dana Ahmad Khreis at the Royal Cultural Centre.

Thefts account for over 50% of crimes last week

AMMAN (Petra) — The Public Security Department (PSD) Monday reported that 61 crimes were committed in Jordan between Feb. 27 and Mar. 5, of which 43 cases were solved.

Three of the four murders occurring during this period, have been solved, the PSD said. The PSD reported 36 robberies, nine smuggling attempts, four cases of firing weapons, two cases of bodily assault, two attempted suicides and one case of arson.

According to the report, one of the robberies occurred at a home in Tla'a Al Ali district in western Amman.

The owner of the house, who had been away for some time, returned to find all her jewellery and cash in the amount of JD1,260 were stolen, the report said.

It explained that the robber

climbed through a window which had been left open.

The badia and border police force discovered smuggling attempts including 163 bags of hashish destined for a neighbouring Arab state, the report said. Also intercepted were 8,457 sheep.

Of the four gunfiring cases, one resulted in the death of an individual in Ajloun, the PSD reported.

Three of the six cars reported stolen had been retrieved, the report said, adding that not all the cars stolen had been reported to the police.

A woman who attempted suicide is being treated at Palestine Hospital after swallowing an overdose of sedatives.

The report said the woman was believed to be suffering from a mental disease.

Housing and Urban Development Corporation Invitation To Bid

Date: March 9th, 1993
Loan No: 2841 JO
Tender No: (3/G/93)

- The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has received a loan from the World Bank in various currencies towards the cost of the Third Urban Development Project (UDP3) and it is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will be applied to eligible payments under the contract for procurement of goods at BEIT-RASS / IIRID, MARQAB and MANARAH (4) / AMMAN SCHOOLS (UDP3)
- The Housing & Urban Development Corporation now invites sealed bids from bidders whose countries are members of the World Bank, Switzerland, and Taiwan, China for the supply of

Category No.	Description
1	Art & Crafts
2	Physics Equipment & General Science
3	Chemistry Equipment & Chemicals
4	Biology Lab
5	Women Vocational Education
6	Office Equipment
7	General Vocational W/Shop
8	Sports Equipment
9	Audio Visual Aids

- Eligible bidders interested in this Tender may obtain further information from and inspect the bidding documents at the office of:

Housing and Urban Development Corporation — Marka Housing Project.
Amman — Jordan
Telex No.: 22249 JO
Fax No.: 883187
Tel No.: 899361
P.O. Box: 927198

- A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by any interested eligible bidder on the submission of a written application to the above and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of (10) JD per category.
- All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of not less than (5%) of the bid price, and must be delivered to the Director General / Housing and Urban Development Corporation, P.O. Box (927198) Amman — Jordan on or before 12:00 noon local time, on 21st April, 1993.
- Bids will be opened in the presence of bidders' representatives who choose to attend at 12:00 noon local time, on 21st April, 93 at the offices of the Housing and Urban Development Corporation — Marka Housing Project — Amman.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.

الصحف الأردنية المستقلة المنشورة بالإنجليزية من مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية

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By Fred Halliday

OVER A YEAR after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the foreign policy of the new Russian Federation is still in a state of uncertainty. One reason for this is the political and constitutional crisis within the Russian government itself — no one is sure if President Boris Yeltsin can act as an American or French president and dictate foreign policy himself, or if the assertive parliament, with its Communist and nationalist elements, will be able to decide policy.

Another reason is that the foreign ministry itself is trying to pursue one line, based on cooperation with the U.S., while other ministries, such as those concerned with military matters, want the new Russia to play a more independent role.

But the most important reason for the uncertainty of Russian foreign policy is that a new force, public opinion, has now come into play. While it will be many years yet before a democratic process is consolidated in Russia, strong popular emotions have emerged in the past year which limit what the government can do. One obvious example is the question of the four islands claimed by Japan: while it would be in Russia's interest to hand back at least two of these, popular sentiment now militates against any such concession.

Another issue on which nationalist feeling runs high is the acceptance of U.N. sanctions against Libya, Iraq and Serbia. In the middle of December Pravda, still the organ of Communist sentiment, put on its front page a short table claiming that Russia's acceptance of these sanctions had cost it \$16bn.

The moral of the story was clear: if Russia abandoned a foreign policy based on supporting the U.S., by which it hoped to get money from the West for this compliance, then it would not need Western money in the first place.

The acceptance of Western policy, especially on Iraq and Serbia, has therefore touched a deep chord in Russian politics. Few in Russia may admire Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. But Iraq is regarded as one of those old friends of the USSR whom the new Western-oriented foreign policy has alienated. During the Gulf war itself the Soviet defence ministry tried, on at least one occasion, to send arms to Iraq but was stopped by the U.S. Navy.

In this respect, policy on Iraq is conditioned to some extent because of the similar position Ser-

Russia's foreign policy New uncertainties

bia finds itself in. Here Russian feeling is strong, given the historic links between the two Orthodox Christian countries. Russia went to war in 1914 in support of Serbia against Turkey, Austria and Germany, and reportedly hundreds of Russian volunteers are fighting on the Serbian side now. Some Russian nationalist groups are re-

"(Russia's) policy towards the Middle East as a whole is now less of a priority than it once was. Commercial considerations prevail."

ported to have sent members to Serbia to gain combat experience, in case of future conflict in Russia itself.

Solidarity with Serbia is fuelled itself by what has now become one of the main themes in Russian popular sentiment about the outside world, namely a revived hostility to a perceived "Islamic threat" in general and to Turkey in particular.

Even some foreign policy ex-

away from Russia; that the Russian market is being swamped with shoddy Turkish consumer goods; that Russian women are flocking to Turkey to work as prostitutes; that Turkish policy is working towards an eventual break-up of the Russian Federation itself, by encouraging separatism in the autonomous republics of Tatarstan and Bashkiria.

According to this line of thought, Bosnia is merely a client of Turkey, and a means by which

Turkey can regain control in the Balkans, which it lost as a result of a series of wars with Russia between 1870 and 1914.

The implications of this rise of nationalist feeling against Turkey and the U.S. for the rest of Russian foreign policy are as yet unclear.

In broad terms, it means that it will be comparatively more difficult for the pro-Western foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, to pursue his policy. The main focus of the foreign ministry now is not on remote issues at all, but on what is called in Russian the "near abroad", the former republics of the USSR where Moscow expects to maintain a dominant influence.

One particularly difficult area of the "near abroad" is the Caucasus: on the side which is still part of the Russian Federation there are several inter-ethnic wars, and one region, the Chechen republic, has declared itself independent. Its dictatorial self-styled president, Jokhar Dudaev, who some compare with Saddam Hussein, has appealed for support from Turkey and Jordan (where there is a small Chechen minority) and many Russians fear that the Turks are

encouraging further secession there as well.

Policy towards the Middle East as a whole is now less of a priority than it once was. Commercial considerations prevail. Russia is looking for business partners, for investment in Russia itself, and is willing to sell arms, for cash. It has sold substantial quantities of weapons, including submarines and Mig jets, to Iran.

In the Arab-Israeli context, Moscow is committed to playing its co-chairmanship role, albeit in a most junior fashion, and is hopeful that with a new administration in Washington the talks will receive a new impetus.

In the longer run, however, much will depend on how quickly and effectively Russia can reconstitute itself as a major, internationally effective power. If the Russian Federation undergoes greater crisis, perhaps even civil war as some fear, this will have enormous negative implications for the Middle East, as for Europe and the Far East. If Russia can, over five or ten years, reorganise itself, then it will play an independent role in the Middle East.

The problem is that no one can now say how long all this will take.

The writer is professor of international relations at the London School of Economics. The article appeared in Middle East International.

Eliminate discrimination first

MARKING INTERNATIONAL Women's Day can never be a one-day ceremonial celebration. Jordan is moving slowly in the direction of making the commemoration of the occasion more meaningful and lasting. For this purpose, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NEHF) has unveiled for this year's celebration an ambitious project for the advancement of women's status in the country in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other specialised U.N. agencies. The NEHF aims to attain this goal by first enhancing the role and effectiveness of the Jordanian societies and associations concerned with the elevation of the level of women's participation in the development of the country and secondly by monitoring progress or the lack of it in this vein.

This effort is most welcome. But it can only be effective if pursued within the context of the overall situation of women and their quest for equality and equal opportunities in development and governmental positions. There is no way that Jordan can succeed in the promotion and protection of women's rights as long as the central issue of their equality with men is not considered first and dealt with in earnest. Jordanian girls, mothers and professional women cannot aspire to realise their search for equality as long as Jordanian laws, current and proposed, still entertain and contemplate the perpetuation of inequality between the sexes.

During last year's session of the Human Rights Committee (HRC), charged with the application of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the 18-member tribunal established that Jordanian legislation and practices violate the relevant provisions of the covenant that proscribe discrimination on the basis of sex. It is the right time now as Jordan is commemorating International Women's Day to ask the government about what it intends to do with the findings of HRC on this issue.

The most fitting way for Jordan to celebrate the marking of the day is to formulate and declare a policy statement on the subject explaining how it plans to honour its treaty obligations under the covenant especially in the field of women's rights.

Jordan is due to submit a new report to the HRC on progress achieved in this vein this year. Instead of releasing old sterile submissions that all is fine when it comes to women's rights, it behooves the concerned authorities to introduce the necessary amendments to the existing laws with the aim of eliminating all lingering discrimination against women.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily Monday said that the Israeli terrorist campaign against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip will not deter the freedom-seekers who are determined to pursue their struggle for liberating their usurped lands. Indeed, the ongoing campaign is bound to give further impetus to the Arab population to counter Israel's terrorist attacks and pay them in their own coin, said the paper. The Gaza Strip has proved that it constitutes a strong and solid rock on which all Israel's conspiracies are being dashed, the paper added. It said the Israelis ought to have learnt from past experiences with the Arabs that they cannot go on committing atrocities without facing retaliation and ought to have realised that the Jewish state's criminal actions can by no means impose capitulation on the local inhabitants, the paper continued. Needless to say, the easiest and more direct way to end the violence and counter violence in the occupied Arab lands lies in the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and exchange land for peace with Arab people who yearn for genuine and lasting peace, said the daily. What is required from the Israelis now is total abstinence by the Geneva conventions and safeguarding the human rights of the civilian population, said the paper. The paper said that it is clear to the world community that the Palestinians have chosen the path of struggle to liberate their homeland and there is no doubt that the oppressed peoples determination to attain their objective is bound to intensify and increase until the occupied territories are liberated.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i Arabic daily Monday tackled the status of women in Jordan on the anniversary of the International Women's Day, saying that this year the anniversary finds Jordanian women in disarray, unable to unite for a specific cause. While the country is moving towards political pluralism and democracy, one can hear voices here and there demanding that women stay at home and be prevented from going out to work, said Mohammad Kharrunb. The writer claimed that Jordanian women are doing nothing to fight this trend neither are they united in their drive to play a leading role in political, social or economic affairs and in coming to the help of women in rural regions and badia. This anniversary finds the General Union of Jordanian Women dissolved and its members failing to unite their efforts for a specific cause due to numerous factors, mainly the hegemony and greed of men, said the writer. It is hoped that this anniversary will give some impetus to women's union leaders to take steps intended to change this pitiable situation and involve Jordanian women in endeavours aimed at contributing towards the country's development, the writer said. The writer advised women to transcend side differences over leadership and other matter, and work together in concert to attain the aspired end.

The end of history?

By Pascal B. Karmy

MR. FRANCIS FUKUYAMA is a former deputy director of the U.S. State Department's Policy Planning Staff. He is currently a resident consultant at the Rand Corporation in Washington D.C. As his name indicates, he is an American of Japanese origin.

He first published an essay in the magazine National Interest in 1989, entitled, "The End of History." But what did he mean by "the end of history?"

As I understand Mr. Fukuyama, he means, in short, that the triumph of capitalism and democracy in the West has ended the political conflict in the world.

Then he went on to delineate the end state of the human social evolution. It is not necessary here to refer to what he calls the logic of modern science and the struggle for recognition, both of which he considers as the two powerful forces at work in human history. What should be of interest to us is his thesis on "The End of History" because of the attainment of democracy and liberalism in the West.

Capitalism and democracy do not necessarily co-exist. As Mr. Fukuyama himself points out, "there are many historical and contemporary examples of technologically advanced capitalism co-existing with political authoritarianism from Meiji Japan and Bismarckian Germany to present day Singapore and Thailand."

In many cases, he adds, "authoritarian states are capable of producing rates of economic growth unachievable in democratic societies." He admits therefore that "our first effort to establish the basis for a directional history is thus only partially successful."

The successive events which took place in the Soviet Union and in the Eastern European countries in the last months of 1989 have, however, given new dimensions to the thesis of Mr. Fukuyama, which he fully explained in his book "The End of History and the Last Man."

It seems that Mr. Fukuyama has been inspired by the opinions and ideas expounded in the 1930s by the French-Russian philosopher Alexandre Kojève who taught a highly influential series of seminars at Paris's Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in the 1930s.

Mr. Kojève was the greatest interpreter of Hegel in the 20th century, especially of his book "The Phenomenology of the Mind." In this book, Hegel considered the victory of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1806 in the Battle of Jena — when the latter's army crushed the Prussian army — as the end of history.

This did not mean that there would be an end of events arising out of births, deaths and social interactions of humankind, or that there would be a cap on factual knowledge about the world. Mr. Fukuyama says that when Hegel declared that history had ended after the Battle of Jena in 1806, he was obviously not making the claim that the liberal state was victorious throughout the world; its victory was not even certain in his little corner of Germany at the time.

What he was saying was that the principles of liberty and equality underlying the modern

liberal state had been discovered and implemented in the most advanced countries, and that there were no alternative principles or forms of social and political organisation that were superior to liberalism.

Mr. Fukuyama adds that the bloody conflict between liberty and despotism continued after Jena as witnessed in the two world wars resulting in the victory of the liberal states. Communism, appeared after World War II but, according to Mr. Fukuyama, it did not represent a higher stage than liberal democracy but was a part of the same stage of history that would eventually universalise the spread of liberty and equality to all parts of the world.

Though Bolshevik and Chinese revolutions seemed like monumental events at the time, their only lasting effect would be to spread the already established principles of liberty and equality to formerly backward and oppressed peoples and to force those countries of the developed world already living in accordance with such principles to implement them more completely.

For almost two centuries since Hegel's proposition of the end of history, democracy and liberalism continued to spread slowly but surely in many parts of the world. According to Mr. Fukuyama, the revolutions and conflicts which took place in favour of ideas or principles on Communism or on Fascism have subsided and almost disappeared.

Now we witness a complete victory of democracy and liberalism and this is the end of history, as Mr. Fukuyama sees it. Democracy and liberalism came out victorious because they concentrate on the spiritual side of humankind more than on any other factors or movements. This spirituality gives to humankind its proper dignity, respect and prestige.

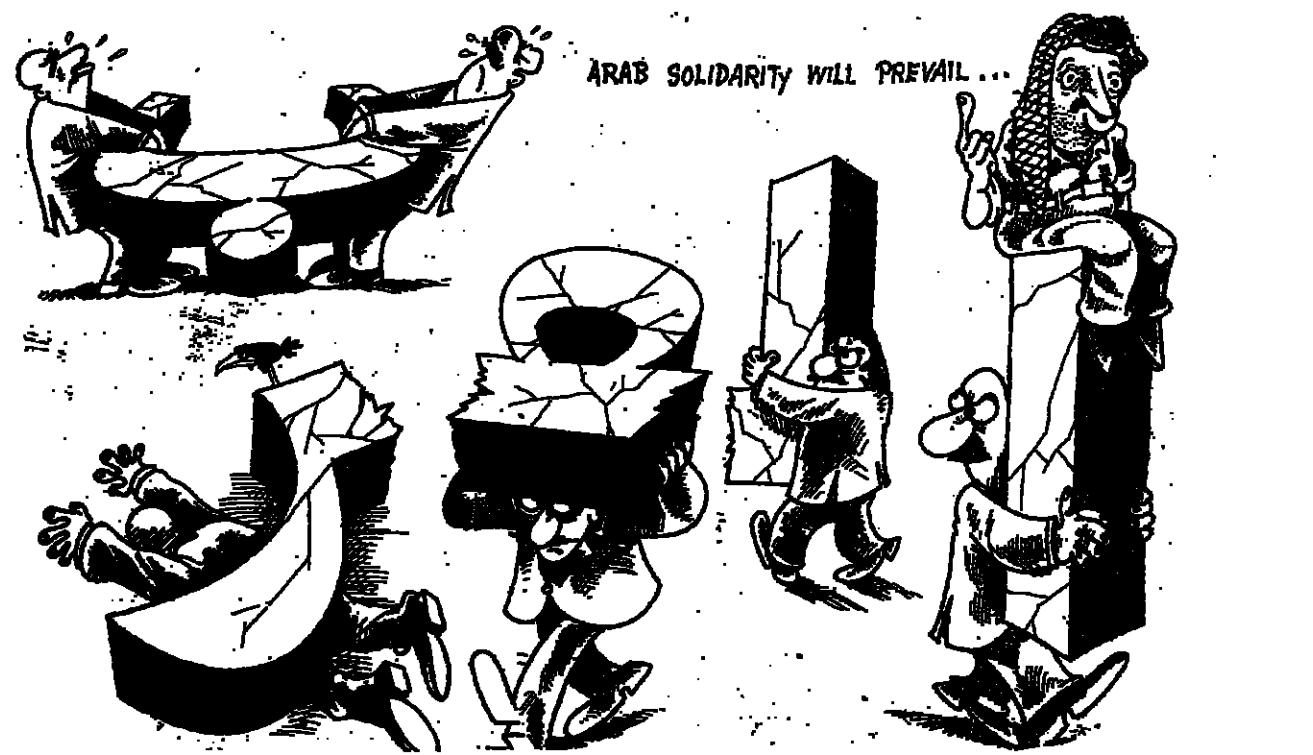
There is no doubt, Mr. Fukuyama asserts, "that contemporary democracies face a number of serious problems, from drugs, homelessness, and crime to environmental damage and the frivolity of consumerism. But these problems are not obviously insoluble on the basis of liberal principles, nor so serious that they would necessarily lead to the collapse of society as a whole, as Communism imploded in the 1980s."

Of course we may not agree with all of what Mr. Fukuyama expounds in his book; but it contains many truths and incontrovertible facts. It is a thought provoking explanation which deserves to be read by all Arab intellectuals.

There is no doubt that democracy and liberalism have provoked and still provoke many arguments and discussions, especially in the Arab World. While there are still many countries in the Third World which are neither liberal nor democratic, it is hoped that the Arab peoples will continue to struggle for the attainment of those two noble objectives.

Every person loves to be free and have his voice heard as it is an inherent part of human nature. One can only fulfil those two desires through genuine liberalism and democracy.

Pascal B. Karmy is a local writer who occasionally contributes to the Jordan Times.



Syria

Pleasant promises

By Leslie H. Gelb

ISRAELI DIPLOMATS told the new and untested American secretary of state to expect some kind of pleasant surprise in Damascus two weeks ago. President Hafez Al Assad, ever the strategist, did not disappoint.

He gave Warren Christopher a secret diplomatic gift that could lead to a redrawing of Middle Eastern battle lines and has already caused the United States, Syria and Israel to revamp negotiating priorities.

The Syrian strongman told the chief U.S. diplomat that he was ready for a major deal with Israel. He repeated public statements about trading "total peace" with Israel for "total withdrawal" by Israel from Syria's Golan Heights. Then he unwrapped his dramatic present: He would no longer insist on instant or even early Israeli withdrawal. He would agree to both sides carrying out their obligations "gradually."

This was precisely the magic word Yitzhak Rabin had been looking for. The Israeli prime minister had signalled his desire to exchange land for peace, but the security risk had to be manageable. Israel could not and

would not take the chance of withdrawing from the Golan until Syria actually demonstrated peaceful intentions, and that would have to take time. Israel would feel safe only if it could bring its forces down from the heights gradually.

The sides still have to define "gradually." More important, they have to agree on the meaning of "total withdrawal" and "total peace." Israel is prepared for a near-total pullout, not a total one. Syria wants everything out, including Israel's civilian settlements.

Mr. Assad's diplo-biz surprised the Christopher party. They had expected him to wait longer before making any big moves, in order to assess President Bill Clinton's mettle. But the Syrian's agreeableness on the Golan convinced the Americans that he had even larger purposes in mind.

The subtext in the Assad-Christopher dialogue was that Damascus wants to establish a new relationship with Washington and felt that this was the right time to move. Mr. Assad knows that the only way to the American heart is through peace with Israel.

Mr. Rabin was, of course, delighted with Mr. Christopher's report of Syrian gradualism. Given the prime minister's intense personal commitment to a treaty with Syria, the Americans feared that he might be too delighted — and try to sidetrack the autonomy talks with the Palestinians.

If anything, however, Mr. Christopher ended up more frustrated with the Palestinians than Mr. Rabin was. In his meeting with Palestinian leaders he showed great impatience with their inability to make any decisions.

They only wanted to talk about the return of their brethren deported by Israel and stranded in a Lebanese no-man's-land. Israel had already gone far to meet those concerns, but they kept demanding concessions that they knew Israel could not and would not give. Finally, Mr. Christopher offered a generous solution — including U.S. pledges to speed up the deportees' return, oppose future deportations and support various United Nations resolutions prized by the Palestinians — and told them to take it or leave it.

The immediate upshot of the

Christopher Mideast tour was that the key parties agreed to switch negotiating priorities. They are now readying the fast track for a Syrian-Israeli deal and have relegated the tedious but still critical talks on Palestinian autonomy to a slower lane.

Arabs and Israelis alike praised Mr. Christopher's first outing on terrain that has proved either a graveyard or a springboard for his recent predecessors. He gave away nothing to the Syrians, was tough with the Palestinians and provided the Israelis.

His only tactical mistake was a failure to pay enough attention to Shimon Peres, the Israeli foreign minister, whose power now rivals or exceeds Mr. Rabin's in the governing Labour Party and whose ideas on regional issues and economic development and arms control deserve a better hearing.

Mr. Christopher has begun to reveal a wily negotiating and public relations style. Taking a page from Henry Kissinger's script on how to lower expectations, he started his Mideast trip saying that he was going out there only to listen. He brought home the possibility of much more. — New York Times

LETTERS

A gloomy bus ride

To the Editor,

I SOMETIMES use buses between Amman and Jerash. When I am forced to use them in rush hours, I feel gloomy because I am always involved in the anarchy at either Jerash or Abdali.

When a bus appears, young men rush to it before it stops. As soon as the door opens, they get on the bus pushing others aside, before the disembarking passengers have had a chance to get off.

Consequently, it is only young men who take the available seats. The elderly and women, on the other hand, are watching aside this jostle, as if they gave up getting on the bus from the start. At last it takes more than one hour for them as well as for me to find a free seat.

Is this a normal situation?

Such a mess can be seen only in buses between Amman and Jerash, while the passengers to other directions, such as Irbid and Sweileh, are waiting in line for their buses.

Hisahiko Wada
Jerash

Hand in hand

To the Editor,

SEX SEGREGATION in our schools was one of the last amendments to be introduced by some of our respected deputies in Parliament. I think that these deputies are making it sound as if they have solved or discussed all our other problems and so they started with this issue, which does not concern a good percentage of our country. They have even forgotten that we are living in the 20th century.

In Jordan, we cried for so long for democracy, human rights and more freedom. And now that we have achieved everything up with a new education law to force us to send our sons and daughters to the schools the deputies think are appropriate. I think their kids should be sent to.

I was very impressed with the ideas of Deputy Faris Al Nabulsi, from going astray is to arm them with sound culture and proper education. Yes, we should educate them and teach them how to deal and respect each other, not separate them and scare them from each other. Finally, I believe that we, men and women, need to go hand in hand to create a new society that is able to face the problems of our time.

Amjad M. Fram
P.O. Box 1184
Irbid

Suspect assures family of innocence

(Continued from page 1)

and JD 5 on buying presents to his six sisters and four brothers. Amin Salameh said his son was religious but not a fundamentalist who used to pray mostly at home and advocated a moderate interpretation of Islam.

He said Mohammad became more religious after entering university, but did not join any political group or fundamental organisations.

Mohammad's mother said she contacted his family by phone between Jan. 20-25 and there was nothing unusual in the conversation.

"We spoke about him getting married and he asked about his sister's performance in her law-

examination," she said. Mohammad's parents said they believed their son was not capable of committing the crime which they condemned as an act that goes against the teachings of Islam and hurts innocent people.

Amin Salameh, who left the West Bank village of Bedieh near Nablus in October 1967, one month after Mohammad was born, in search of a job, said he had faith in the American judicial system.

"This case will prove if the U.S. is truly a democratic country," he said.

"The U.S. is the mother of democracies," Mohammad's mother said, adding that when the truth is found her son would be proven innocent.

Britain upgrades PLO contacts

(Continued from page 1)

over the six points." "Contacts will continue until the Israeli position falls in line with the six points," he said.

"Our emphasis is on achieving an Israeli commitment that it will not expel Palestinians in the future, and that it will set a timetable for the phased return of expellees in line with U.N. Security Council Resolution 799."

Mr. Hussein said he believed it would be very difficult for Arabs to resume peace talks with Israel if the Palestinian demands were not met by the Jewish state.

Mr. Safieh, the PLO representative in London, said Tuesday's meeting in London would focus on the peace process and means of solving the problem of the Palestinian evacuees.

He said the meeting — considered a "breakthrough" by Palestinians — and the British move to upgrade contacts were aimed at helping the PLO to arrive at a decision to resume the peace talks.

Mr. Safieh, in a telephone interview with the Jordan Times from London, said the meeting was highly significant since it "reflects the British government's recognition of the unity of the Palestinian people both inside the occupied territories and in the diaspora."

"Israel and some Western countries expect the PLO to remain moderate, to continue its moderating influence, and to accept being marginalised at the same time," Mr. Safieh said. "It is too much to ask from the PLO."

There was no official confirmation of the British move, but a Foreign Office spokesman contacted by the Jordan Times said official engagements were usually announced on the same day.

Palestinian sources considered the British step a signal of a more active future European role in the Middle East peace process. "It is not a new political decision. It is simply the resumption of an old British policy. However, it has political significance considering the timing of the move," a PLO source said.

A spokesman at the British Foreign Office in London, insisting on anonymity, said "ministerial contacts with the PLO were

cut off during the Gulf crisis — on Sept. 2, 1990, — as a result of the organisation's support for (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein."

Since then, British contacts with the PLO were confined to the British ambassador in Tunis. The spokesman declined to explain why London was amending its policy. "Here in London, we keep our policies under constant review," he said.

It was understood that the status of the PLO office in London would remain unchanged despite the upgrading of contacts.

The British government does not recognise the State of Palestine declared by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in 1988; it does not recognise the PLO office in London as an embassy. But it does consider the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, and the British ambassador to Tunis has on many occasions met with Mr. Arafat, according to PLO sources.

A senior Palestinian official in Tunis believed the timing of the British move "was aimed at appeasing the Palestinians, and signals a European intention to play a more active and direct role in the Middle East peace process with the approval of the United States."

"A formal relationship with the PLO will open a crack for London through which it can play a vital role in the Middle East; British interests are involved here," he said.

The expected British move followed a Belgian decision last week to upgrade the status of the PLO mission in Brussels in what was seen as part of European Community (EC) steps to improve ties with the PLO and assume a higher-profile role in the peace process.

"We expect a flurry of activities by the EC soon after the meetings in London, signalling an American approval of a more active European role in the peace process," a senior Palestinian official said.

The official said an EC "troika" — representing the present and immediate past and future presidencies of the commission — was expected to visit Washington next week in a bid to explore the possibilities of the community expanding its role in the efforts for Arab-Israeli peace.

Arab-American held after questioning

(Continued from page 1)

Boulos said he has not been permitted to meet with Mr. Hamdan, but hoped to see his client Tuesday. Mr. Hamdan was initially reported to be from Chicago because his U.S. passport was issued there, the lawyer said.

U.S. Consular Officer Donna Sherman confirmed the arrest of an American, but cited privacy laws in refusing to give his name.

Mrs. Sherman said the U.S. consulate was informed of the detention by Israel on March 1 and visited the man last Thursday.

The two Arab-Americans who remain jailed are Mohammad Salah, 39, and Mohammad Jarad, 36, both of the Chicago area. They were arrested Jan. 25 and have been ordered held by military judges while accusations against them are investigated.

Palestinian shot dead in Gaza

(Continued from page 1)

gave me a truck, I would leave today," Mr. Ukra, 23, told Israel army radio. "We're talking about fear, about helplessness, about trembling."

Zvi Hendel, who heads the Jewish settlements' council, said the government should be ruthless in restoring order to the strip. He told Israel army radio the army should "kill all the wanted men and deport all inciters once for all."

Col. Y. the army commander in the southern sector of the strip and whose name cannot be used under military regulations, warned there were no immediate solutions.

"This is not an ideological issue, but a long term struggle," he told reporters at the scene of the killing.

Gaza's security problems have meant that Jewish settlement there remains minimal despite years of support from previous hawkish governments led by the Likud Party.

Unlike the occupied West Bank, where government housing subsidies and other benefits brought 129,000 Jewish settlers to live among one million Palestinians, there are less than 5,000 Jews living among Gaza's 800,000 Arabs.

The renewed violence has prompted some officials, led by Health Minister Haim Ramon, to push for Israel to announce it would simply pull out of the strip it seized in the 1967 war in the near future.

But Housing Minister Benjamin Den Eliezer warned Monday that a hasty departure without first improving the economy would create mayhem. He said Israelis had to insure "we don't

have in our backs the largest terror base in the Middle East," Mr. Den Eliezer told Israel Radio.

The week-long closure had provoked much anger in the impoverished strip where few jobs are available. About half of Gaza's labour force of about 100,000 people works in Israel, mostly in menial jobs.

On Monday, about 30,000 Gazans left for jobs in Israel. Heightened security checks at the Erez checkpoint created long lines.

In separate incidents in the strip, troops shot and wounded 13 Palestinians in isolated clashes. Arab hospital sources said.

Leaders of Gaza settlers called for a crackdown in the strip. Israel sealed off the area last Tuesday after a knife-wielding Gazan killed two Israelis and wounded eight in Tel Aviv.

"I propose closing the strip for a week, two weeks, going house to house to find all owners of weapons, all the terrorists, killing the wanted ones, expelling all the inciters immediately and forever," said settler leader Zvi Hendel.

When six Israeli soldiers were killed in a week last December, Mr. Rabin expelled 415 Palestinians to Lebanon. Accusing the exiles of links to militant groups and defying world criticism, Mr. Rabin said he had to take drastic measures.

But Arab-Israeli violence has surged since the Dec. 17 expulsion. Jews have killed at least 52 Arabs and Arabs have killed eight Jews.

Hours after Israel closed the strip last Tuesday, Arabs stoned and shot dead an Israeli gas company worker who strayed into Khan Younis refugee camp.

FBI says more arrests expected

(Continued from page 1)

construction workers Sunday shored up the basement levels of the massive twin-tower complex, the second highest in the world.

Officials for the port authority of New York and New Jersey, which runs the complex, said they plan to reach the "Ground Zero" explosion site this week where they hope to find more evidence of the bombing.

The bomb was detonated on Feb. 26 on a ramp leading to a parking garage below ground, and workers have had to brace the structure of the building in order to allow investigators to reach the area.

Specially trained dogs continued to search for a missing worker, believed to have been killed in the blast.

Iran, in a Tehran Radio commentary on Sunday, accused Israel's Mossad of playing a role in the bombing in an effort to whip up a frenzy against Islamic fundamentalism.

The telephone number Mr. Salameh gave to the van rental agency belonged to Josie Hadas, a woman whose age, ethnic background and nationality have not been disclosed by authorities.

FBI officials would not comment on whether Hadas was an Israeli or had any links to Israeli intelligence. The agency has disclosed almost nothing about Hadas since Mr. Salameh's arrest.

Key facilities in the city remain on alert following the blast. Part of the port authority bus terminal in Manhattan, used daily by thousands of commuters from New Jersey, was closed for 90 minutes on Monday morning to investigate a suspicious package. Nothing was found.

The FBI said it searched an apartment in Jersey city, N.J., on

Sunday but denied a published report that someone had been taken into custody there.

The apartment belonged to a suspect in the trade centre bombing who moved out two or three months ago, the Jersey Journal of Jersey City reported Monday, quoting sources it did not identify.

The New York Times quoted an investigator on Monday as saying an earlier raid at another apartment in Jersey City turned up three small metal alarm clocks, which could be used as timing devices for a bomb.

More than a week after the Feb. 26 explosion, the question "who bombed the World Trade Centre?" was still largely unanswered. The search for answers spans the globe.

The blast in an underground parking garage killed at least five people, injured more than 1,000 and shut down the world's second-tallest buildings for at least a month.

Two dogs sniffing through the rubble Sunday turned up no trace of a building employee still listed as missing.

The Jersey Journal reported Monday that a man currently living in the apartment raided Sunday was taken into custody. But FBI spokesman Joseph Valtierra said Monday the man was never in custody or under arrest and there were no charges against him. He said anyone in the apartment would have been asked to leave during the search.

During Sunday's raid, agents were seen carting away cardboard boxes, a large gray suitcase, two rolled up carpets and a rifle bag.

Investigators also were looking into Mr. Salameh's links to Al Sayyid Nosair, who was acquitted of murdering radical Rabbi Meir Kahane in 1990.

No cars in German cities?

By Nao Nakanishi
Reuter

STUTTGART, Germany — Car makers wanting to banish cars from cities may appear to be killing off their own industry, but Daimler-Benz, BMW and Volkswagen are convinced their future depends on ending urban traffic jams.

The three German car giants are investing heavily in the development of computerised traffic management systems.

Trial projects due to start soon in three German cities are aimed at making it more costly and time consuming to use private cars while dramatically improving public transport. Cars will increasingly be excluded from city centres.

Stuttgart, home to Germany's largest industrial group Daimler, last month became the first city in the world to give the go-ahead for a trial of a comprehensive traffic system developed by a Daimler-led consortium.

"In Germany, in Europe and elsewhere in the world, we will only be able to bring traffic under control with traffic management systems," said Hartmut Weule, a Daimler management board member.

"With our STORM (Stuttgart Transport Operation by Regional Management) project, we are

testing a technology which will be in demand internationally tomorrow," he told journalists.

Bayerische Motorenwerke (BMW) is working with other firms, railways and city authorities in Munich to develop a similar project and Volkswagen is doing the same in Hanover.

The core of traffic management will be a computer system which collects, processes and distributes all current traffic data available on the flow of vehicles into a city.

When the systems are in place, electronic signposts will advise drivers of the quickest routes and warn about hazards such as ice, road works and accidents.

If traffic is congested, the signs will tell drivers how long it is likely to take them to drive into town while simultaneously listing faster public transport alternatives.

Displays will include timetables for the nearest buses, trams or trains and the location of nearby car parks.

Suburban park-and-ride centres will be improved so people can leave their cars and walk to railway stations or bus stops without having to brave rain and bad weather. Parking fees will increase the closer the car park is to the city centre.

One possibility being examined is to programme cassette-radios in cars so that they automatically

record radio traffic bulletins and alert drivers to them.

Trains, trams and buses will run more frequently and timetables will be coordinated to minimise waiting times.

Traffic lights will give public transport priority over private cars and trucks.

"We can create such a system today with existing computer technology," Christoph Huss, director of BMW's street traffic and safety division, told Reuters.

"The question is only whether we want it or not."

Together with local authorities, radio stations and electronics companies such as Siemens and Bosch, Daimler and BMW are spending some 60 million marks (\$36.50 million) each for the first stage of their projects in Stuttgart and Munich.

In April, Daimler will start installing computer operated street signposts to enable people in Stuttgart to choose transport based on latest traffic data.

Private car ownership in Western Germany has risen six-fold to 31 million during the last 30 years, but road networks, excluding motorways, have expanded by only about 40 per cent.

Traffic is increasing inexorably but there is less and less space for

new roads to alleviate the congestion.

The problem is particularly acute in Eastern Germany where the number of cars surged after unification in 1990, far exceeding the pace of new road construction.

BMW Management Board Chairman Eberhard von Kuehnheim says that in response to the growing congestion car makers must learn to think in terms of transport systems.

"The car industry cannot concentrate on one form of transport," he said. "It must think beyond its own product."

The car makers are also negotiating with major department stores to create home delivery systems as an additional incentive for people to switch to public transport.

At a later stage, information systems could be expanded to enable drivers to retrieve data through computers or broadcasting systems in their cars.

"For a few thousand marks you will be able to also buy computer with a card containing road map of the whole of Germany. It will communicate with the information centre and devise a strategy for avoiding traffic jams," said BMW's Huss.

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Lights go out on Croatia coast as energy crisis mounts

ZAGREB (R) — Croatia's power suppliers pulled the plug on thousands of homes and factories on the Dalmatian coast Monday in an escalating energy crisis wrought by war and severe drought.

Workers at cement, steel and chemical plants were sent home and managers were forced to shut down factories, crippling the coast's already shell-shocked economy.

Croatia's state-owned power company Elektroprivreda ordered all electricity supplies to be cut from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m. daily for an indefinite period, saying these draconian measures were aimed at saving off a total collapse of power supply to the coast.

"It's an extremely difficult

situation. There'll be over a million people without electricity for most of the day and even worse all factories are shut," said Marko Lovric, Elektroprivreda's distribution manager for Dalmatia.

But hospitals, bakeries, milk suppliers and kindergartens should not be hit, he added.

The cuts will, however, put paid to attempts to revive Croatia's tourist industry — a potential multi-million dollar earner — and cause more hardship for thousands of Bosnian refugees sheltering on the coast.

"It's awful. I don't remember anything being as bad as this," said mother-of-three Ivanka Banovac when contacted by telephone in the Adriatic port of Split. "We have no heat and the temperature is below freezing."

Croatia's electric power grid suffered massive damage in 1991 when Croatian militia fought a bloody independence war against rebel Serbs.

Most transmission lines from the main body of Croatia to its coastal arm were destroyed when Serbs seized control of the Kraina enclave. The region almost cuts the coast off from the rest of the country.

Mr. Lovric said the region had been served mainly by small hydroelectric plants for the past 18 months, but reservoirs feeding the stations have been nearly drained after two and a half months of drought.

"Dalmatia has operated like an island for the past 18 months and now the situation is critical. We need rain, lots of rain," he said.

Surprisingly, the Dalmatian coast has been receiving power from thermo-electric plants in neighbouring Bosnia despite an 11-month war there. Supplies from plants near Travnik and Kakanj in central Bosnia have reached the coast through transmission lines passing through the south of the country which is in the control of Bosnian Croats.

"Cooperation with Bosnia has helped but now they too have problems and have started power cuts," Mr. Lovric said.

Tomo Bolatin, commercial director of the ferro-alloy plant of Dugi Rat in Split, said 70 per cent of the 14,000 workers had been sent home. The rest were just coming in to do administrative work.

Dubai gold imports go up by 72 per cent

DUBAI (R) — Dubai's gold imports rose 72 per cent in 1992, an all time record for the UAE emirate which is ranked the world's fifth most important gold trading centre.

Imports were 284 tonnes in 1992 worth some \$3 billion compared with 165 tonnes the previous year and 161 tonnes in 1990, according to World Gold Council (WGC) figures released by the WGC office in Dubai.

"The steep increase in Dubai reflects in part recent Indian legislation to allow gold imports by

expatriate Indians returning home," a WGC report said.

"Dubai is a major source of gold for India. Preliminary estimates for gold demand in the Indian sub-continent (in 1992) indicate a volume of some 300 tonnes versus 280 tonnes in 1991," it said.

Traders attributed the boom to a dip in world gold prices and the easing of controls on gold imports in countries like India and Pakistan. Dubai does not impose any restrictions or tariffs on the import and export of gold.

Pakistan budget deficit expected to be 7.4 per cent of GDP

ISLAMABAD (R) — Pakistan's budget deficit will balloon in 1992/93 because of flagging tax revenue and the high cost of devastating floods last year, a government minister and World Bank officials said.

"Pakistan will have a 7.4 per cent deficit this year (July/June) according to the state (central) Bank of Pakistan," Minister of State for Economic Affairs Sardar Assef Ali said in a recent interview.

"This is dangerously high even though it is an optimistic figure," he said. The central bank refused to comment.

A report by a World Bank economist Sunday included similar forecasts.

Several senior government officials have warned the gap would widen to as much as nine per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), far outstripping forecasts

of five per cent when the budget was announced last May.

Pakistan said then the budget deficit would not exceed 65 billion rupees (\$2.58 billion), about 5.0 per cent of GDP.

In 1991/92 the deficit made up 6.1 per cent of GDP, down from 8.8 per cent the previous year but well short of the target of 4.8 per cent set by the International Monetary Fund as part of its conditions for helping Pakistan.

World Bank official Pedro Alba forecast the deficit would exceed 7.5 per cent because of devastating floods that swept across the central Punjab cotton growing belt and cost the government an estimated \$2.5 billion in losses and relief work.

An internal government report has said Pakistan's economic growth rate may be slashed to 4.0 per cent from projections of 6.3 per cent as a result of the floods.

The economy surged 7.6 per cent the year before.

Mr. Alba said Pakistan had not been entirely successful in improving its fiscal and external account balances and said revenue mobilisation had not been as strong as it could be.

Tax revenue has remained basically stagnant since fiscal 1988, he said, and the structure of expenditures needed to be examined.

"Innovative ways must be found to collect money," Mr. Ali said, adding that no one in Pakistan had ever been convicted of tax evasion.

Tax collection has improved significantly, Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz said in a recent interview. It rose 12 billion rupees (\$461 million) last year to 142 billion (\$5.46 billion) and this year's target had been set at 172 billion rupees (\$6.6 billion).

Iraq says it lost \$55 billion of oil exports

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said Monday it lost up to \$55 billion in oil exports by the end of 1992 as a result of a U.N. embargo imposed after its invasion of Kuwait.

"The value of material losses inflicted on Iraq as a result of a halt in oil exports... until the end of 1992 reached \$55 billion," the government newspaper Al Jumhuriyah quoted a source at the oil ministry as saying.

The source said Iraq's total production before U.N. sanctions was 3.2 million barrels per day (b/d) of which 2.75 million were for export. Its pre-sanctions OPEC production quota was 3.1 million b/d.

United Nations sanctions imposed on Iraq soon after its Aug. 2, 1990 invasion of Kuwait block all trade with Baghdad, apart from imports of food and medicine.

In January the newspaper quoted another source as saying that losses from the U.N. embargo on Iraqi oil amounted to \$44 billion by the end of June, 1992.

Gulf war bombing inflicted damage worth \$1.8 billion on oil installations, the source said.

Iraq says it has repaired its oil facilities and would be ready to export more than two million b/d once the U.N. decides to remove restrictions on its crude exports.

Nestle sells some water brands in return for Perrier

BRUSSELS (R) — Swiss food giant Nestle has wrapped up its takeover of the Perrier bottled water group when it offers to sell other big mineral water brands like Vichy in the name of fair play won European Commission approval.

Nestle, which already boasts household food names from sweets to baby milk powder, spent more than a year fighting foes and regulators for control of Perrier, renowned for its pear-shaped, green bottles of bubbly water and punchy advertising campaigns.

In return for the crucial go-ahead from the commission under European Community merger rules, Nestle agreed to sell a string of other top water brands such as Vichy, Saint-Yorre, Thonon and Pival to the French beverage group Castel.

The commission had approved Nestle's 15.46 billion French franc (\$2.8 billion at current exchange rates) purchase of the world's largest bottled water group in July.

But tied the deal to sell-offs so that Nestle and French food

group BSN would make room for a third competitor in the French market for bottled water.

Nestle had previously fought off a potential rival bid by the Italian Agnelli family, owners of Italy's biggest private industry group and car maker Fiat.

Once preliminary clearance came from the commission, it needed only to find a list of sell-offs to wrap up the deal.

But in February the commission rejected Nestle's first sell-off plan, which had not included Pival, as insufficient.

Czechs revalue crown by 2% against ECU

PRAGUE (R) — The Czech central bank Monday revalued the crown currency by two per cent against the European Currency Unit (ECU) to curb a rapid decline in Czech-Slovak trade, the bank's spokesman said.

The ECU is used in a clearing

system to settle trade between the Czech and Slovak republics after they abandoned the Czechoslovak crown as their common currency and began using separate units on Feb. 8.

"According to the agreement (on the monetary split), each

party can revalue or devalue its currency against the ECU by up to five per cent," bank spokesman Martin Svehla told Reuters.

The Slovak central bank devalued the Slovak crown by five per cent earlier this month.

Revaluation of the Czech crown would make Czech goods more expensive abroad but Slovak goods cheaper for Czech buyers.

Mr. Svehla said the reason for the revaluation was a 1.5 billion crown (\$3.5 million) Slovak deficit in trade between the two newly-independent countries in the first three weeks since they adopted separate currencies.

Even before that, trade between the two declined. In January they exchanged goods worth six billion crowns (\$21.4 million), some 40 per cent less than in the same month in 1992.

"The drop is not only a monetary problem," he said. "There are a lot of administrative barriers which curb mutual trade or make it impossible."

Czechoslovakia split into separate Czech and Slovak republics on Jan. 1. Businessmen now need a number of customs documents to export their goods to the other country.

Czech Economy Minister Karel Dyba said if imports continue at some 30 to 40 per cent of past levels it would result in companies taking forced holidays or stopping production.

He told the Czech daily Mlada Fronta Dnes it would cause gross domestic product (GDP) to shrink by three to five per cent. Last year Czech GDP fell by 6.7 per cent to 738.3 billion crowns (\$26.4 billion). In 1991 it shrank by 14 per cent for all of Czechoslovakia.

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Deutsche Mark	1.6693	1.6685
Swiss Franc	1.5458	1.5420
French Franc	5.6555	5.6545
Japanese Yen	117.62	117.38
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Japanese Yen

European Currency Unit

8/3/1993

U.S. Dollar

Sterling Pound

Deutsche Mark

Swiss Franc

French Franc

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Bosnian Muslims order offensive against Serbs to 'save people'

SARAJEVO (R) — The commander of Bosnian Muslim forces ordered an offensive Monday against Serb forces to relieve pressure on Muslim enclaves and prevent the massacre of innocent people.

Sefir Halilovic said thousands of Muslims, including women, children and sick people were at risk from Serb forces in the Konjic area and Srebrenica pockets of eastern Bosnia.

He ordered Bosnian Muslim units in Olovo and Kladanj to attack Serb-held Vlasenica, which controls a vital Serb road link, and Serb forces around a Konjic police station.

Commander Halilovic said every available Muslim soldier in eastern Bosnia should go to the Srebrenica and Konjic police areas to help existing Muslim forces.

U.N. peace keeping forces and aid officials have expressed concern for the safety of thousands of Muslims trapped in the region since Serbs have blocked since the civil war in Bosnia began last spring.

The settlement of Cerska fell to Bosnian Muslims and many of its inhabitants fled to Srebrenica 50 kilometres south.

Sarajevo's old town came under heavy artillery bombardment shortly before midnight Sunday but the Bosnian capital remained quiet during the night.

Six U.S. cargo planes dropped more than 46 tonnes of supplies over Srebrenica early Monday in the eighth airdrop mission to eastern Muslim pockets.

"For the third night, the airdrops targeted the town of Srebrenica where refugees are said to be gathering after fleeing attacks by Bosnian Serb forces in eastern Bosnia," a statement by the U.S.-European Command said.

The airdrops, at high altitude to avoid possible ground fire, have so far dumped about 210 tonnes of military rations and 5.4 tonnes of medical supplies over the former Yugoslav republic.

General Philippe Morillon, commander of the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia, was due to meet Serb and Muslim military commanders to discuss a ceasefire around Srebrenica to enable aid to be sent in and sick or wounded people to be brought out.

He wants to open a safe corridor from the town to evacuate those of its 60,000 people, including refugees from fallen Muslim settlements, who want or need to leave.

Bosnian Serbs are insisting that any evacuation of Muslims from Srebrenica must be matched by a similar measure to allow Serbs to leave the Muslim-held town of Tuzla.

Leaders of Bosnia's warring Muslims and Serbs, returning from crucial peace talks in New York, were consulting their supporters Monday on whether to stand firm or make concessions to reach a peace agreement.

The break in the peace negotiations came as U.N. forces in the embattled former Yugoslav republic stepped up efforts to get food and medical aid to trapped Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia and take out the sick and wounded.

Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic said he was leaving New York for consultations in Sarajevo but would return later in the week "with the intention of moving the discussions forward to a successful conclusion."

3 killed in S. Africa bus attack

URBAN (R) — Gunmen killed three people and wounded eight others in an attack on a bus in South Africa's strife-torn Natal province Monday, police said.

There are three dead and eight wounded, police Captain Jamilton Ngidi said.

The African National Congress (ANC) earlier said 10 of its supporters had been killed on their way to a court hearing in Pietermaritzburg on previous massacres.

It was the third major attack in a week in the province, scene of bitter political fighting between the ANC and its main rival, the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

Six children were murdered in an ambush on a pickup truck taking them to school in the hilly Table Mountain area near Pietermaritzburg last Tuesday.

This was followed by an attack on a minibus in the same area Friday in which six women and four men died.

The latest attack took place at Swazimane, also near the Natal capital.

Three men appeared briefly in

3 tainted ministers go in S. Korean reshuffle

SEOUL (R) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam, his cabinet crumbling under the pressure of his anti-corruption crusade, Monday replaced three tainted ministers with fresh faces.

Mr. Kim, sworn in less than two weeks ago with a mandate to clean up the corruption and political life in South Korea, was forced to shake up because some of his original choices for key posts admitted wrongdoing.

A presidential spokesman said the reshuffle, which affected justice, health and construction ministers, was designed to "remove obstacles to reforms" being carried out by Mr. Kim.

"President Kim apologized to the nation for public controversy over some cabinet appointments. But he stressed his determination to achieve a clean society through change and reform remains firm and unwavering," the spokesman said.

Mr. Kim is due to launch a special committee under his direct command to oversee his anti-corruption campaign, aides said.

"Kim was prompted to launch the committee... by the furor surrounding some of his cabinet appointments and by the endemic corruption permeating Korean society," the domestic news agency Yonhap quoted an aide as saying.

Justice Minister Park Hee-Tae, whose daughter gained back-door entry to university by renouncing her citizenship, was thrown out and replaced by Prosecutor General Kim Doo-Hee.

Health Minister Park Yang-Sil, alleged to have performed illegal abortions and to have made unlawful property deals, was replaced by Song Jeong-Sook, a newspaper editorial writer.

In an unexpected move, the president ousted Construction Minister Huh Jai-Yong in favour of Koh Byung-Woo, president of the Korea Stock Exchange.

The presidential spokesman said a probe into Mr. Kim's past showed he had "many problems," but he refused to elaborate. New reports speculated Kim had amassed a huge fortune through illegal land speculation.

Lee Won-Jong, a former provincial governor, was appointed mayor of Seoul, succeeding Kim Sang-Chul who was dismissed last week only three days after getting the job.

The outgoing mayor is accused of illegally developing green belt land to the south of the capital into a private garden.

Kanamaru riches stun even cynical Japanese

TOKYO (R) — Fallen Japanese powerbroker Shin Kanamaru, behind bars after his arrest on tax evasion charges, diverted political donations worth 2.8 billion yen (\$24 million) for private use, allies reported Monday.

"The people's distrust (in politicians) has now reached a dangerous height of anger because of allegations that he hid the money for his own personal gain," said Asahi Shimbun.

"It made a fool of those who often repeat the maxim about politics being a costly business."

Asahi and another daily, Yomiuri Shimbun, said Mr. Kanamaru, 78, and top aide Masahisa Haibara switched 2.8 billion yen worth of political donations since 1984 into five-year discount bonds, which do not require registry by name.

Such bearer bonds, issued by the Nippon Credit Bank, have often been used to cheat the taxman. Prosecutors have confiscated the certificates as evidence, the dailies said.

Of the total sum converted by Mr. Kanamaru and Mr. Haibara into discount bonds, prosecutors said they were considering possible tax evasion charges on 1.2 billion yen (\$10 million) of their incomes since 1987, the reports said.

The rest of the total could not be used in an indictment because of a five-year legal limit on tax evasion charges.

It was unclear who gave Mr. Kanamaru or Mr. Haibara the money.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said Monday he did not believe the international community would send troops against Serbian forces in the former Yugoslav republic.

Mr. Karadzic, speaking on his return from New York during a break in Bosnia peace talks for consultations, was responding to a statement by U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali.

The United Nations chief said Sunday that members of the world body must be prepared to send troops against Serbian forces if the Serbs failed to agree to a peace plan for Bosnia.

"I do think the international community does not plan any use of force, since we have foretold enough," Mr. Karadzic told Reuters Television in Belgrade.

"They should help us find a solution to the crisis."

Mr. Karadzic said his side had put forward a plan in New York similar to one worked out by international mediator Cyrus Vance for the former Yugoslav Republic of Croatia.

"We are absolutely positive that this is the only way out of this crisis," he said.

Croatia is divided into three areas under the protection of U.N. peacekeeping troops pending a political settlement.

Mr. Karadzic has rejected a new map from Bosnia dividing it into 10 semi-autonomous regions largely along ethnic lines, and has advocated a truce in the fighting while a political solution is negotiated.

European Community foreign ministers Monday discussed moves to tighten sanctions on rump Yugoslavia, but played down the idea of outside military action if negotiations among the warring parties broke down.

Lord Owen, co-chairman of the U.N.-sponsored peace conference on the former Yugoslavia, briefed ministers on the state of play in New York peace talks which broke off temporarily at the weekend to allow Bosnian Muslim and Serb leaders to consult their respective governments.

Lord Owen told reporters on arrival in Brussels that the next few weeks were critical and there were many things which could be done to help restore peace to war-torn Bosnia.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd played down the apparent suggestion by U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali that U.N. member states must be ready to send troops against Serbian forces if they fail to agree a negotiated peace.

"I don't think there is anything in that... no one is suggesting the use of force before an agreement is reached," he said.

Mr. Hurd said that if Lord Owen found that Bosnia's Serbs were mainly to blame for holding up a peace agreement, "Then I am sure that we would want to consider straight away how to tighten the grip of sanctions."

Mr. Hurd said he was having talks with CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) sanctions coordinator Antonio Napolitano ahead of Monday's ministerial meeting to discuss details of how sanctions could be made to bite harder on Serbia and its small ally Montenegro.

Mr. Hurd said one option was "making it impossible for oil to come down the Danube."

Pietermaritzburg magistrate's court Monday in connection with the massacre of the children. No charges were put when Sibiso Zulu, Jeremiah Zulu and a youth who could not be named due to his age appeared.

The case was adjourned to March 30.

Black and white political leaders have expressed fears the attacks were part of efforts to derail South Africa's fragile democracy negotiations leading to an end to white minority rule.

Full-scale democracy talks are due to begin next month.

N. Korea goes on 'semi-war' alert

TOKYO (Agencies) — North Korea Monday proclaimed a "semi war state" in response to joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises, saying it would be on high alert against attack during the manoeuvres.

The Communist North routinely issues bitter denunciations of the annual Team Spirit military exercise, which it describes as a provocation.

North Korea's official news agency, monitored in Tokyo, said the armed forces and citizens alike should "keenly watch every move of the enemy with full revolutionary vigilance and keep themselves in full combat readiness to destroy the enemies at one stroke."

More than 120,000 U.S. and South Korean troops are to participate in this year's manoeuvres, which the United States and South Korea say are purely defensive.

Last year's exercises were cancelled as a peace gesture to North Korea after the two Koreas signed an accord to promote dialogue. But the 1993 exercises were reinstated after North Korea refused to agree to international inspections of its suspected nuclear weapons facilities.

The 10-day exercises, beginning Tuesday, are among the largest joint war games in the world, although they have been greatly scaled back from 1991, when more than 2 million troops participated.

The Korean peninsula was divided into the North and South in 1945 and the two sides fought a three year war after the North invaded the South in 1950. The border between them is tightly sealed and the most heavily fortified in the world.

Swiss lift casino restrictions, agree to gas hikes

BERN (AP) — Swiss voters Sunday opted to relax a virtual ban on gambling and raise gasoline prices by one fifth, answering the government's plea for more cash in central coffers.

Nearly 120 years after casinos were first outlawed by the constitution, 72.4 per cent of voters, or 1.7 million people, accepted government proposals to drop most restrictions.

A slight majority of 54.4 per cent, or 1.3 million, voted in favour of a 20 centimes (13 cents) hike per litre of gasoline, currently about one Swiss franc per litre.

Voter turnout was 50.4 per cent of the 4.5 million electorate.

The government and the tourist industry lobbied hard in favour of the roulette tables, arguing that existing restrictions — among the most draconian in Europe — are outdated.

The Swiss constitution banned "the opening and running of gambling houses" in 1874. This was in response to excesses by the likes of Russian poet Fyodor Dostoevski, who staked his livelihood on wild nights of roulette. Dostoevski, who once returned to his shocked wife without his coat and wedding ring, reputedly based his 1862 classic *The Gambler* on his own experiences in Geneva.

In 1956 the electorate voted to ease the ban slightly and fixed a five franc (\$3.3) upper limit on stakes. It has remained there ever since, much to the chagrin and embarrassment of owners of the 18 permitted casinos.

The Swiss spend an estimated 900 million francs (\$600 million) per year on money spinners like roulette, blackjack and baccarat at casinos just over the borders in Germany, Austria, Italy and France.

Brushing moral concerns aside, the government said this money could just as well be spent inside Switzerland. It wants to use the anticipated annual revenues of 150 million francs (\$100 million) on social security benefits.



U.N. soldiers sit in trenches southeast of Sarajevo Airport to defend positions following an attack on a humanitarian convoy (AFP photo)

Communists stage march in Moscow

MOSCOW (R) — Diehard Communists marked International Women's Day here Monday by banging empty pots in protest over poverty and calling for the overthrow of President Boris Yeltsin's government.

"Yeltsin is a butcher of the Russian people," said one of the banners sailing among a sea of red Soviet flags, carried by a crowd of around 1,000 people who gathered near a huge statue of Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin.

Several dozen women, mostly elderly, carried empty pots and pans banging them with spoons to protest against poverty caused, they said, by Mr. Yeltsin's drive from communism to capitalism.

March 8, International Women's Day, was one of the biggest holidays in the former Soviet Union and Russia's parliament kept it as a national holiday.

Apart from this rally, Moscow appeared to be calm less than two days ahead of a crucial meeting of the country's highest legislature.

The conservative-dominated Congress of People's Deputies meets Wednesday, likely to target Mr. Yeltsin and his reforms.

The Monday march was staged by the Russian Communist Workers' Party, a hardline faction in the country's Communist movement.

The party says it is ready to fight Mr. Yeltsin and his government by every means to restore the Soviet Union and Communist rule.

It views Russian reforms as a successful implementation of a plot by "world Zionism" masterminded with the help of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

"Everyone come to fight Yeltsinism," said the party's paper.

"To unity by an uprising."

The crowd, accompanied by a heavy police escort, marched towards the government headquarters through sunlit Moscow streets.

Meanwhile, President Boris Yeltsin proposed a new compromise to end a power struggle with conservative rivals which threatens to destabilise Russia and wreck his economic reforms to establish a free market.

He called for this week's session of the Congress of People's Deputies to adopt a "law on power" which he said would clearly define the responsibilities of executive and legislative authorities.

"I do not want confrontation with legislative power," Mr. Yeltsin said in an interview on Commonwealth Television Sunday.

He was speaking two days after the conservative-dominated parliament set the stage for a head-on clash at the Congress by rejecting his proposals for power-sharing.

"I want a law on power to be adopted," Mr. Yeltsin said, handing draft of the document to the television interviewer.

Russians oppose return of isles to Japan

TOKYO (R) — More than three in four Russians oppose returning four disputed islands to Tokyo, according to a joint Russo-Japanese poll released Monday.

The poll found 76.7 per cent said they opposed giving the islands to Japanese rule, up from 72.2 per cent in a similar poll taken last November.

Asked the same question, 86 per cent of Japanese said they favoured the return of the four islands, up from 81 per cent.

Japan claims sovereignty over the islands, seized by Soviet troops in the closing days of World War II.

Japan has refused to include a peace treaty or offer large-scale aid to Russia unless Moscow recognises Japanese sovereignty over the four islands.

The poll, taken by Japan's Central Research Service and the Russian Centre for Public Opinion and Market Research, surveyed 1,410 Japanese over 20 years old and 1,581 Russians over 16 years old in early February.

Although an overwhelming number of Japanese want to see the islands returned, they had different opinions on the nature of the ties they wish to maintain with Russia.

Almost 45 per cent of the respondents said economic and cultural relations with Russia should be promoted regardless of the territorial issue, while 45.1 per cent said promotion of ties should wait until the dispute had been resolved.

The same poll also asked for an impression of the other country and found that Russians held a better impression of Japanese than vice versa.

While almost six out of 10 Russians said they had a good impression of the Japanese and two out of 10 a very good impression, fewer than one in 10 Japanese said they had a good impression and fewer than one in 100 a very good impression of Russians.

come after consultations with Mr. Amato just hours before.

"It all tends to suggest that Mr. Amato will not take it as an unacceptable insult," said Il Giornale newspaper, but Italian state radio was more pessimistic Monday, saying the government's future looked increasingly in doubt.

Financial markets showed concern Monday, with bonds easing and the lira coming off to 950 against the German mark from 954 Friday. Shares opened weaker.

Mr. Amato must still face an onslaught in parliament Tuesday over his plans, which have disturbed several senior members of his four-party coalition.

Ripa Di Meana, the fourth minister to have resigned because of the scandal in less than a month, had called them "dangerous," fearing the electorate would see them as a plot to save corrupt politicians from jail.

Amato faces darkest hour as decree blocked

ROME (R) — Italian Prime Minister Giuliano Amato faced a revolt in his own ranks as even staunch supporters lined up against government plans to defuse the country's devastating bribery scandal.

His refusal Sunday of State President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro to sign a decree aimed at keeping a flood of corruption offenders out of jail marked a low point in Mr. Amato's stormy eight-month administration, analysts said.

But few were willing to predict he would resign.

Most believed he would simply downgrade the decree into an ordinary bill that needed prior parliamentary approval, replace Environment Minister Carlo Ripa Di Meana who resigned in protest at the weekend and soldier on.

Some thought Mr. Scalfaro, up to now the prime minister's staunchest political supporter, had even saved Mr. Amato's skin by forcing him to re-think a highly emotive issue.

The decree would have immediately removed jail penalties for those convicted of illegally channeling funds to political parties, a major theme of the year-long scandal which has ruined dozens of Italy's political and industrial elite.

It would have substituted fines and an obligation to repay bribes and stay out of office for two to five years.

Opposition parties have branded it a whitewash and even the magistrates it was designed to help have said it would paralyse their investigations.

But the 74-year-old Christian Democrat Scalfaro had objected mostly to the decree form of the plan because he believed it would clash with a referendum on party financing due next month.

"Scalfaro seems to have pulled off an incredible feat, saving his own credibility without bringing down the government," La Stampa newspaper said.

His refusal to sign the part dealing with party financing had

surged in city areas where voters were more anonymous than in small towns, he said.

"The neighbours don't necessarily know there what one will vote," he told German radio. "A lot of votes there went directly from the SPD to the Republicans."

Mr. Roth said the big loss for the SPD was in effect a slap against the local power group and mirrored a seven per cent loss the CDU suffered in the last election.

Although the Republicans say they deplore violence against foreigners, Ignatz Bubis, leader of Germany's small Jewish community, described them as "wolves in sheep's clothing" and urged mainstream parties to have nothing to do with them.

"Anyone who votes for the extreme right now does so out of conviction, not out of protest, Mr. Bubis said on television.

Top German parties ponder rightist election gains

BONN (R) — Germany's mainstream parties, jolted by local elections in Hesse state, began analysing Monday why they had lost so much support to extreme right-wing parties.

Politicians and commentators filled morning television and radio shows with lamentations about how protest votes had helped the far-right Republicans win seats on dozens of local councils.

Embarrassed pollsters sought to explain why their surveys failed to spot the stunning defeat for the Social Democrats (SPD), the traditional power in the western state, or predict the full measure of the swing to the right.

No matter how it was explained, the vote Sunday was seen as a further blow to the established parties and a barometer of mounting frustration with most politicians' failure to solve problems that have arisen since German unification in 1990.

The Republicans and the biggest party was the non-voters," ARD Television commented.

"There are no mass parties any more, there are only former mass parties that cannot integrate their fringes," said Daniel Cohn-Bendit of the Greens, another big winner with 11 per cent.

The anti-foreigner Republicans won 8.3 per cent of the vote across the state, with 9.5 per cent in Frankfurt, Germany's financial capital, and up to 15 per cent in smaller towns.

The big losers were the SPD, the main opposition party in Bonn, which plunged 8.4 per cent from Hesse's 1989 local polls to 36.4 per cent.

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) slipped 2.3 per cent to 32 per cent, but this was better than expected for a party facing broad dissatisfaction with Chancellor Helmut Kohl's tired centre-right coalition.

Dieter Roth of the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen polling group said pre-election surveys had shown a large group of undecided voters who made it difficult to predict the result reliably.

The extreme right, which had been expected to be cowed by the many candlelight marches against racism that followed last autumn's anti-foreigner violence,

surged in city areas where voters were more anonymous than in small towns, he said.

"The neighbours don't necessarily know there what one will vote," he told German radio. "A lot of votes there went directly from the SPD to the Republicans."

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COLUMN

Katharine Hepburn gets clean bill of health

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Actress Katharine Hepburn has received a clean bill of health from doctors of Hartford Hospital and was expected to be discharged this week, a hospital spokesman said. The 85-year-old actress was hospitalised Thursday for exhaustion. Ms. Hepburn underwent tests and was examined by several specialists. Hartford Hospital spokesman James Battaglio said Sunday. Mr. Battaglio wouldn't say what the tests were, but said their outcome was good. He said she should be discharged by Tuesday. Ms. Hepburn, a resident of New York, spends weekends at her family summer home in the Atlantic coast town of Old Saybrook. She was born in Hartford.

Hoax headlines say Indian premier quits

NEW DELHI (R) — An Indian newspaper published banner headlines Monday saying Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao had resigned and former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar had been invited to form an all-party government. The Hindi-language Rashtriya Sahara said Mr. Rao was fed up with infighting in the ruling Congress Party. He submitted his resignation to President Shankar Dayal Sharma, who invited Chandra Shekhar to form a government, it said. Other news items on the front page of the newspaper had Finance Minister Manmohan Singh appointed head of the World Bank, two Bombay film actresses in fistfights on a set, an 800 per cent increase in college fees and the collection of a metro railway in New Delhi by the end of the year. Even the front-page cartoon showed the character from a rival newspaper's strip. The cartoon said he was joining the Sahara because the previous artist had been banned for using steroids. They were all hoax news items published on Holi, the Hindu spring festival associated with mirth and practical jokes. But journalists working on the festival day in India's two national news agencies said they had received several calls asking if the news about Mr. Rao's quitting was true.

2 rescued from life-raft in mid-Atlantic

CAPE TOWN (R) — A British yachtsman and a South African woman were on their way to Cape Town Sunday after being rescued from a life-raft surrounded by sharks in the South Atlantic. It was like seeing the Star of Bethlehem," Briton Paul Rogers said, describing the approach of the ship which rescued him and Kate Anderson Saturday. The nightlight picked them up after eight days on the life-raft. Their yacht Baltic wind, in which they had sailed in the Cape to Rio race, struck a floating object. It sank on Feb. 26, 10 days after leaving Rio De Janeiro on the return trip. Mr. Rogers, speaking to a reporter by radio from the nightlight, said packs of big sharks had swum around their life-raft, frequently ramming it. The Northlight was expected to dock in Cape Town on March 12. Earlier, Cape Town Port authorities said two British men and a South African woman had been rescued from the life-raft.

Mother charged in track star's slaying

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A woman who helped lead a highly publicised campaign to locate her missing daughter was charged Sunday with killing the 17-year-old track star, police said. Viren King, 42, was arrested on murder and weapons charges in the slaying of her daughter, Shilke Turner, who was shot six times, including four times in the head, Police Commissioner Richard E. Neal said. Police refused to discuss a possible motive or other details of Mrs. King's arrest. Turner was last seen at 2:30 a.m. Jan. 10 after a bus dropped her off about six blocks from her home. Her mother reported her missing the next day. Her frozen body was found on Feb. 20 under some brush at a local park. The girl had talked about wanting to leave home for two years because she didn't get along with her mother, her coach, Tim Hickey, said Sunday. Local athletic officials had called Turner the best high school runner in the city and one of the five best in the nation. She ran the anchor leg in several national championship relays, and three days before her disappearance she set a regional record for the 800 metres.